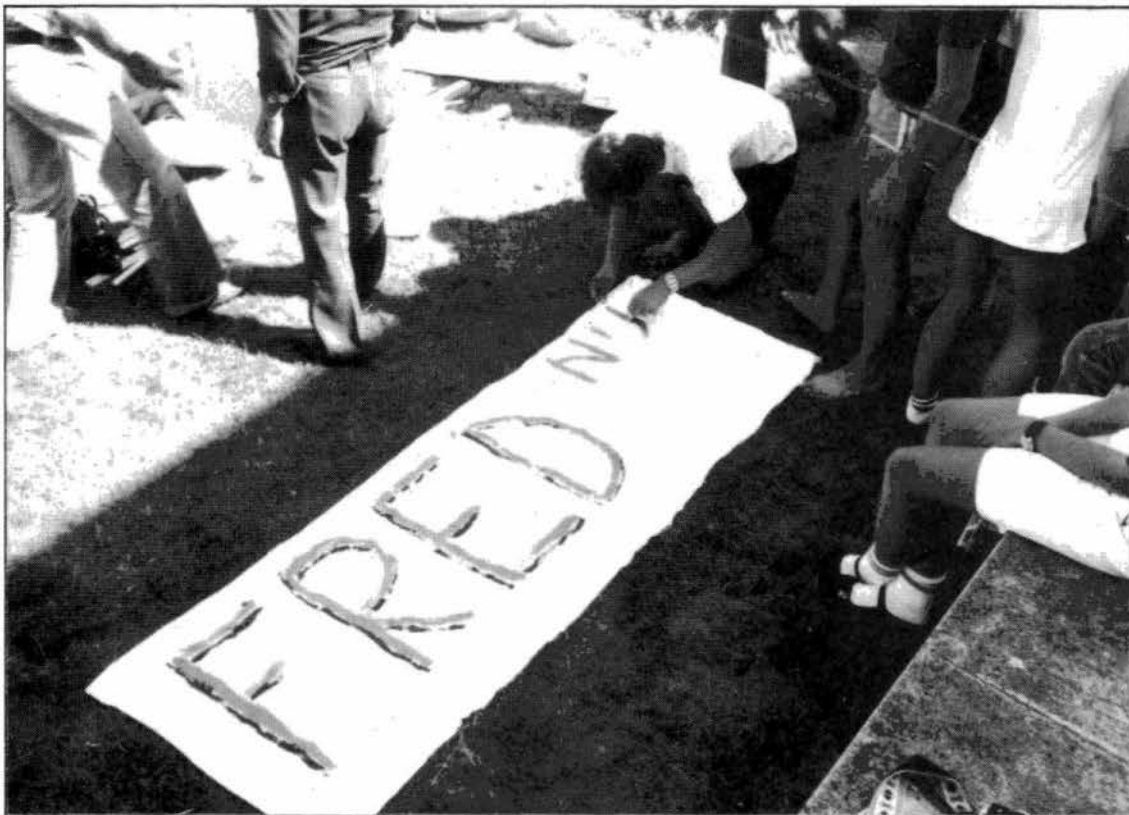


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YOUTH NEWSLETTER

No. 10 December 1982

Youth Desk
Lutheran World Federation



HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE YOUTH DESK!

1982: WHAT HAVEN'T WE SEEN? by Alf Idland

The end of another year is coming to a close. Reflecting on some impressions of the situation of youth in many, if not most, societies today, a striking fact is that youth often are effectively kept out of the positions where decisions are being made. Culture and tradition have determined that youth are seen as "lacking experience," "lacking maturity," and "lacking insight." And therefore youth are supposed to be in the process of learning in order to move into the positions one day.

However, what are they learning? From whom are they learning? Looking back at 1982 which is about to go over into history, the eye-catching elements of the past year seem to be all the follies, the incredible stupidities that we have seen committed by those who profess to have gained experience, to have obtained maturity, to possess insight.

For what haven't we seen? An arms race between two superpowers, in which the argument goes that the more capacity for overkill, the safer and the better for stability and peace. Gather a bunch of these deadly weapons at one spot -- and you turn them into "peace-keepers," contends the leader of one superpower. It does not matter that millions are scared to death, and with good reason. It does not matter that millions are being killed by starvation as an indirect result of the weapons industry.

Leaders of one superpower, indulging in rhetoric about defending freedom and democracy are, of course, very much concerned about everything that happens in Poland, but turn a blind eye to the cruel repression in Southern Africa and embrace dictators in Latin America. While their allies try to wash their hands and pretend to be cleaner.

The leadership of the other superpower, a group of powerful men well past their youth, insist stubbornly that they represent the people in whatever they think and do, though they effectively have to crush their people whenever these people dare to speak up and express their wishes.

We have seen two nations going to war over disputed islands -- the colonels trying to save their own domestic failures by popular adventures, an "iron lady" leading her country -- which always boasts of being civilized -- into the war with a bravado we have barely seen since 1914.

And other follies . . . seemingly endless. Is this really the result of experience, insight, and maturity? Being Lutherans, we are not optimistic enough about human nature to believe that young people would not commit follies of a similar kind -- but we do believe that the arguments of preventing youth from participation are null and void. 1982 is another proof of that. We are even optimistic enough to wonder whether youth, because of their "lack of experience, insight," etc., might sometimes still keep a quality of integrity and principle -- that too often get lost -- and thus be able to contribute to decisions which would produce events of more sense than we have seen in the past year.

We go into 1983 with "hope against hope" -- to quote the apostle.

1984 PRE-ASSEMBLY YOUTH GATHERING PLANS UNDERWAY

Plans are now underway for an international Lutheran youth gathering, to take place in Budapest, Hungary in 1984, preceding the Seventh LWF Assembly. The Gathering will be an important event for the life of our churches.

A Preparatory Committee composed of ten people from various regions came together in October in Geneva to begin plans for the Gathering. The members of the Committee are: Rev. Tamás Fabiny, of the Lutheran Church in Hungary; Susanne Kasch, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (FRG); Rev. Elfried Kühnel, of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil; Nancy Larson, of the American Lutheran Church; David Lin, of the Lutheran Church, Hong Kong Synod; Peter Lodberg, of the Lutheran Church in Denmark; Rev. Renate Rasch, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony(GDR); Eleanor Sander, of the Lutheran Church in America, Canada Section; Kpadeson Sumo, of the Lutheran Church in Liberia; and Rev. Munib Younan, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan. The staff working with the Committee are: Alf Idland, LWF Youth Coordinator; Joan Löfgren, Youth Intern; and Rev. Christina Lövestam, consultant to the Committee from the Department of Studies.

The purposes of the Gathering will be:

To be a celebration where youth will worship, sing, listen, pray, act and witness to each other and gain strength to be sent out into the world

To be an opportunity to share youth concerns, problems, and visions from various contexts

To share the skills and knowledge of youth from many lands with each other

To be a special opportunity for young Christians from Eastern Europe to meet young Christians from other parts of the world in such large numbers and for all to learn from and support each other

To show that young people are an integral part of the LWF and have a valid voice in its work

To prepare youth delegates, youth observers, and stewards for meaningful participation in the General Assembly.

The Gathering will take place July 13-20, 1984, in Budapest. Approximately 250 young people ages 17-30 are expected to attend and hopefully half of them will come from Eastern Europe. Plans have also been made to ensure a balance between male and female participants and to allow for ecumenical participation. The participants generally will be youth delegates, stewards, and observers (stewards assist in the day-to-day operations in the Assembly). The languages of the Gathering will be Hungarian, German, and English. The Committee also planned to explore other language possibilities as well.

The major issues to be discussed at the Gathering will be: peace and justice; living with people of other faiths and ideologies; identity; changing patterns of human relationships; and the role of youth in church and society. The issues will be addressed through many creative means, including small group discussion, audio-visual resources, presentations, drama, music, role-playing, panel discussions, and case studies (on the role of youth in various regions and the LWF). Other aspects of the Gathering will include: worship, Bible studies, a meditation room, opportunities for counseling, a graffiti wall, sharing from various cultural contexts, sharing of skills and ideas for youth work, and recreation and sports activities, and preparation for the General Assembly.

There was also some discussion on the number of youth delegates now expected to attend the Assembly. It was noted that the 20% allocation of youth delegates (of the total number of Assembly delegates) which was proposed by the 1981 Urach Youth Consultation and approved by the Executive Committee, was not met; instead, only 15% of the delegates are to be youth. The Committee requested that the Executive Committee take corrective measures to ensure a 20% youth delegate participation in the General Assembly.

Another, related, issue discussed by the Committee was the allocation of Assembly delegates (including youth delegates) according to church membership (with some adjustments). This allocation resulted in Europe having 28 youth delegates allocated to it and Asia 3, Latin America, 2. It prompted the Committee to ask, "Is representation by membership a just way to allocate delegates?" They asked the Executive Committee, in increasing the number of youth delegates, to also correct the regional imbalance, giving more youth delegates to Asia and Latin America.

The Committee also discussed the relationship of the Gathering to the General Assembly; especially ways the voices of youth present at the Gathering and the Assembly can be raised and concrete contributions made.

A visitation program to precede the Gathering is also anticipated. The German Democratic Republic (East Germany) was suggested as a possible location, and other locations will be pursued in the follow-up work to be carried out by the Youth Desk staff. Such a visitation program would include visiting in local congregations and later gathering together for reflection.

Other follow-up work generated by the Committee meeting includes such things as finances, the involvement of the member churches of the LWF (especially the youth) in the concerns of the Gathering, and selection procedures. The selection of participants for the Gathering should involve youth organizations and student organizations related to the member churches. The Committee expressed a strong concern that the youth chosen to participate in the Gathering be nominated, recommended, etc., by the youth of their churches.

The Youth Desk and the Preparatory Committee INVITE YOUR RESPONSE to these initial plans, to make the Gathering a genuine expression of youth in the LWF.

YOUTH DESK NOTES by Alf Idland.

The notes are not intended to cover everything that goes on at the Youth Desk, but we hope that they give you some idea of what is happening. The article and the pictures on the Preparatory Committee Meeting will hopefully give you some information of what has happened as to the preparations for the youth gathering prior to the General Assembly of the LWF in 1984.

Youth Consultation in Botswana.

A youth consultation is being planned for Southern Africa. It is scheduled to take place in Gaborone, Botswana February 1-10, 1983. The main theme of the consultation, which is sponsored by the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa in cooperation with the LWF, will be "The Role of Christian Youth in a changing Southern Africa" with emphases on "the history of the liberation struggle", "evangelization today", "Christianity and other religions and ideologies", "social involvement" and "worship". Seven delegates per member church including directors will make up the delegation.

A Third Youth Leaders' Conference in Asia.

Plans are under way to prepare for a third youth leaders' conference in Asia for the part of the region which was not included in the two conferences held in August 1982. Joan will join a preparatory committee which is about to be established and which can hopefully meet early next year. The plan is to include some visitation for Joan in connection with the committee meeting.

Youth Event in West Africa?

Plans are being developed to gather a few youth leaders from some of the churches in West Africa for a small workshop in the latter half of February in order to discuss the needs for youth work in the region and also to develop some concrete plans to try and meet some of these needs. One possibility which has gained support in some of the churches already, is to have a youth event of some kind in the latter half of 1983.

Youth Assembly in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria.

The Youth Assembly of the "Evangelical Youth in Bavaria" is scheduled to take place in the Gemeindeakademie in Rummelsberg near Nürnberg, January 6-9, 1983, and I have been invited to take part. The Assembly which will divide up into group, will focus on "youth unemployment", "youth of the working class", "employment, sense and value", "new forms of economy and production", "armament and employment", and "church and the working class".

Visit of Namibian graduate to the Nordic countries.

An LWF scholarship student from Namibia, Freddy Kustaa, has been invited, in cooperation with the Youth Desk, by youth/student organisations in Finland, Norway, and Sweden for a visitation in January on his way back to Namibia after the completion of his studies in the US. The visitation will include a youth leaders' conference near Helsinki and meetings with people involved in youth and student work in Oslo and Stockholm. Freddy, having received a bachelors' degree, will return to Namibia to begin teaching in High School.

Visit to Yugoslavia.

In order to prepare for the 1984 event, one priority is to try and deepen contacts with youth and youth leaders of the churches in Eastern Europe. I was scheduled to visit the three Lutheran churches in Yugoslavia from the end of last month to the beginning of this month. After a couple of days in Belgrade I arrived in Novi Sad where the Slovak Evangelical Christian Church of the Augsburg Confession in Yugoslavia has its center. I was also able to visit the congregation in Stara Pacova which has a very active youth group. We had valuable discussions about ideas to develop further contacts leading up to the Budapest event.

Unfortunately a bad influenza suddenly struck, keeping me in bed for three days in the hotel in Novi Sad. Eventually I had to break off my travel and go back to Geneva - but I hope to visit the two churches at another occasion.

PEACE NOW IN SWEDEN.

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PEACE NOW was the theme of the big youth gathering sponsored by the Church of Sweden Youth Council in Skövde near Göteborg August 4-8, 1982. For the gathering itself about 850 young people from all over Sweden came together to ponder on the issue of peace in all its aspects. Also a group of about 30 international participants was a visible and important part of the event.

A tropical summer had descended upon Sweden making problems for those who had packed their suitcase imagining they were going to the cold northern part of the world. But the days continued with sweltering temperatures illustrating well the intensity of the program itself.

The Youth Council in its own publication - Kyrkans Ungdoms rundbrev - gives the following evaluation of the event:

"For the Church of Sweden Youth Council this youth gathering was not only a manifestation of the fact that we have many members, but also a real push forward in the continued involvement for peace, disarmament, justice and human freedom and human rights....The Christian message teaches us certainly how appropriate it is to show humility, to have patience and to have the ability of listening. But God's word to us is also that we actively take our responsibility as stewards of the earth, and that we cry out in protest when we feel that our existence is lacking in harmony and justice."

The Youth Desk supported the travel for five of the international participants who after the gathering also were invited to stay for a week with a family in a congregation in the same diocese as the gathering was held in. The following are some of the reactions we have got in form of reports:

"Being a Lutheran myself, it was very interesting and thrilling to be amidst and worship with an exclusively Lutheran community. The liturgy, but for the language, was known to me. Participating in a youth gathering consisting of a thousand boys and girls is really a wonderful experience. Getting to know about the life and problems of young people of other nations not only enriches our experience, but also enables us to work out solutions to such problems in

the Indian set-up. I could discuss problems facing the Christian Youth in my country. This discussion attracted a lot of enthusiasm."

"The following week was one of challenge and blessing. I stayed with the District Chairman, Rev. Lennart Mallgre, who owns a big farm in Ulricehman. He had drawn up an interesting schedule to visit a few churches in his District. On every one of the five evenings, I had the opportunity to meet different members of the congregation and to exchange views on our respective countries, Christian life and programmes. Many expressed their desire to communicate with me at various levels -- the youth, the Sunday School, Women's Fellowship. Thus I had a good exposure programme in the Diocese of Skara." (Chandran Paul Martin, India)

"Each foreigner was sent to a family to experience something of Swedish lifestyle. I was sent to Sandered, a small town in the Diocese of Skara. My temporary "home" was with the family of Pastor Gustav Lilijequist. They have three children. The wife is a special teacher for slow learners. They had arranged a programme every evening for me. It was a beautiful experience to stay with a family and I am grateful to them for their kind hospitality, and especially for the organizers for this exposure." (Richard Doss, Malaysia)

"The second topic that was discussed in our small group at the gathering was, "Why is peace dangerous?" We have discussed the various dangerous effects of violence in different parts of the world, such as in Lebanon, Iran and Iraq, Afghanistan, South Africa and Zimbabwe and how we cannot live in peace. A brief introduction to peace groups such as "Amnesty International" and its work was explained by the initiator of the group. How the active youth groups in various countries should respond to the "peace movement" was also emphasized. The group felt that the violation of human rights should be condemned and human values in every part of the country should be appraised. It was also felt, finally, that the folly of increasing the arms equipment is only destructive, negative. It threatens life, creation, peace, and love, and hinders justice in the world." (T.Y. Devaraju, India)

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN COMMUNICATION? by Laurids Korsgaard

If you are interested or involved in communication, the meeting of the Commission on Communication held in May 1982 may have special importance for you. At that meeting, a series of decisions were taken with regard to youth involvement in communication in the LWF. This was reported in a previous Youth Newsletter.

One of the decisions from the meeting was, that it will be the responsibility of the Communication youth advisor (myself currently) to bring young people involved in Lutheran communication into contact with one another. The background for this decision is that many young people involved in communication feel a lack of fellowship with fellows in a situation like their own. This often means a lack of inspiration and peers, with whom it could

be good to share problems and good ideas.

If we succeed in bringing young communicators and young people interested in communication into contact, then I am convinced that it would be helpful in these ways:

Young communicators will receive inspiration from one another and from other cultures, which can bring new dimensions into their own work.

All involved will get a more specific knowledge and understanding of the subject: Youth in communication.

The LWF/Commission on Communication will be able to take steps which maybe can help you in your communication work and in general increase the youth participation in Lutheran communication both among the producers and the audience.

I really hope that many young communicators and other interested youth will participate in this sharing of information. Of course, it is unrealistic to bring people together in international meetings for this purpose, so we have to communicate with one another by letters. Perhaps some of those writing together will meet somewhere later -- and then an important contact would already have been established.

Initially, I imagine that all interested people send a letter to me, in which you tell about yourself, your interest or involvement in communication, what problems or ideas you may have with regard to communication, etc.

I will also be glad to learn how you imagine that this "contact project" might continue. When I receive the letters, I will make copies of them and will share them with all who have sent letters to me. In this way all those interested will have the opportunity to read all of the letters. In the second round, you can respond to me on these letters (and I will make a new copy round) or you can perhaps write to some of the people with whom you have something special to share.

Please write to:

Laurids Korsgaard
Jens Baggesensvej 108 3.tv.
8200 Arhus N
DK DENMARK

before FEBRUARY 15.

Later you will receive letters, hopefully from many young communication people.

I am always also interested in letters from you, if you have some special ideas for the communication youth advisor. (L.K.)

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS?

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The word "alternative" has been used to describe everything from energy sources to eating habits to living arrangements. The following article challenges us with another, yet significant, use of "alternative", calling us back to a genuine celebration of Christ's birth, and reflection upon this season.

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN EXPECTS TO ENLIST SOME 8,000 U S CHURCHES THIS YEAR (from LWI, December 2, 1982)
by Tammy Tanaka (Tanaka is a Religious News Service staff writer)

NEW YORK, Dec. 2 (rns)-- While Americans are expected to spend a record US\$ 20 billion on Christmas this year, growing numbers of frustrated people will drop out of the commercialized Christmas rush and join the "Alternatives" way of celebrating Jesus' birthday, a spokesman said here. "We're under no illusion that we're about to become the majority; but the minority is increasing," said the Rev. Milo Shannon-Thornberry, director of Alternatives, the non-profit group based in Forest Park, Georgia, which encourages simplified lifestyles and more religiously meaningful celebrations. About 3,000 congregations took part in Alternatives' first Christmas campaign in 1980, Shannon-Thornberry, a United Methodist minister, said in a telephone interview. It was formally supported by four denominations--United Methodist Church, Reformed Church in America, American Lutheran Church and Presbyterian Church. US participants increased to some 4,900 congregations in 1981. This year, he said, a dozen denominations have encouraged 100,000 churches to participate, and some 8,000 congregations are expected to do so. Individual Catholic parishes across the nation will also join.

Using material prepared by Alternatives, participating churches will try to reverse "the commercialism and self-indulgence of contemporary Christian celebrations to focus on the real meaning of Christ's birth." This involves such ideas as using Advent for study and reflection instead of making frenzied Christmas gift preparations; and of setting aside 25 percent of what they spent on last year's Christmas to give to a church program for the needy. "Whose birthday is it, anyway?" was the theme launching the annual Alternatives Christmas campaign in 1980. This year's theme is "Where shall we find him?"

Alternatives is also again sponsoring the "best and worst Christmas gift contest," to call attention to the creative possibilities as well as abuses in Christmas celebrations. In 300 words or less, people may describe the Christmas gift they received in 1981 which was "particularly meaningful, human, personal, considerate of the earth and which reflected the deeper meaning of Christmas," or

which was "particularly extravagant, tasteless, useless, dangerous or utterly crass." Deadline for entries is Dec. 16. Winners in the two categories will receive prizes of US\$ 100 each, which will be given in their name to a non-profit charity of their choice. Despite the recession, economic forecasts show Americans will still spend US\$ 20 billion this Christmas, up US\$ 2 billion from last year.

Denominations supporting Alternatives' campaigns this year are the American Lutheran Church, Church of the Brethren, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Episcopal (Anglican) Church, Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Mennonites, Presbyterian Church in the US, Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ, United Presbyterian Church, United Methodist Church and some Southern Baptist state conventions.

Alternatives has prepared a basic US\$ 4 Christmas packet which includes "Where shall we find him" posters and bulletin inserts; worship aids; and Advent Bible study guides for adults, youth, children, and inter-generational groups, written by church leaders of various denominations. It includes an alternative giving guidelines which include a cost-analysis form that individuals can use to find out how much they spent last Christmas. The packet also gives suggestions on how the resources can be used. A new 192-page Alternate Celebration Catalogue (Pilgrim Press, US\$ 8.95) by Shannon-Thornberry is also available. It combines the best material from the earlier editions of the catalogue. The Alternative Christmas Campaign address is P.O. Box 1707, Forest Park, GA. 30051. Entries for the best and worst Christmas gift contest should be sent to P.O. Box 1707-A.

HIBER CONTERIS, PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

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December 10th marked the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948.

Although the Declaration has been in effect for over three decades, human rights violations persist.

The following, based upon information provided by a Youth Newsletter reader, Andrés Thomas, related the plight of one of the many people of conscience now imprisoned.

December 2 marked the sixth year of imprisonment for Hiber Conteris, Uruguayan writer, professor, and former Methodist minister.

Conteris was arrested in Montevideo in 1976 and was eventually charged with "assault upon the constitution" and "criminal and political alliance." He had been active in religious and social

justice organizations, was a reporter for the weekly, MARCHA, has written plays, and taught in a university and seminary. He has also had ties with organizations such as the WSCF, WCC, LWF, and Christian Peace Conference. He is now serving a 15-20 year sentence in the Libertad prison.

The campaign to free Hiber Conteris was launched by his family and by an Amnesty International group, in an attempt to press the Uruguayan authorities to review his case and to allow him a fair trial, hopefully resulting in a reduction in his sentence and his release.

For more information about Conteris, write:

Campaign to Free Hiber Conteris
North American Office
Mr. Andrés Thomas
Box E-1036 Earlham College
Richmond, IN 47374 USA

or

Campaign to Free Hiber Conteris
European and World Office
Ms. Corinna Gusken
Ziegelweg 15
4050 Monchengladbach 3
Federal Republic of Germany

(The following statement was made at the UN 2nd Special Session on Disarmament.)

ARCHBISHOP DOM HELDER CAMARA (PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL)

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These are such serious moments in human history, that instead of accusing ourselves, not only as individuals, but as persons and institutions, we have need of prophets, who, in the name of the Lord, would call us to true conversion, to a real change of life style, and to new birth.

How unhappy we are! We do not have prophets and we laugh at prophecy.

Spirit of God, play the role of prophets, and even more than inviting us to collective conversion, compel us to accuse ourselves and start to live the truth, you who alone are capable of liberating us.

You know, as a Person, Spirit of God, that in the course of the centuries of human life Man in the field of intelligence has always demonstrated that he is participating in God's intelligence. Yet, due to selfishness, this participation reaches a delay, which leads to extremities impossible to overcome.

We from the West and the East, what have we done and what are we still doing?

During the time that we in the West ended the First World War, the East had brought about a revolution contrary to the system

prevalent in the West, a system of socialist workers, without capital, without God.

The West has been presented as the defender of the faith and Christian civilization. Yet it has privileged a small minority and has oppressed millions of human beings.

The confrontation of the century seemed to come between the superpowers of the West (United States) and the East (Soviet Union) which has quickly passed from a feudal state to being a rival of the United States.

During World War II, the West in order to conquer the Nazis, pretended to forget that Communism seemed intrinsically evil and sought its collaboration.

At the end of this war at Yalta, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin divided the world into zones of influence between the East and West.

The First and Second World were already more alike than they want to admit.

Profit, the number one value for Capitalism, silently points to the fact that its system has materialistic roots. The Soviet Union trades with what is most imperialistic in Capitalism, namely the Multinationals and the banking system.

The two superpowers have their satellites and each in its own fashion, oppresses the Third World.

The East and the West are well into the arms race.

As Pope John Paul II told this assembly, the arms race, be it nuclear, chemical or biological, is the greatest folly we can imagine.

The two superpowers have the power to exterminate life on our planet several times over.

Even if a nuclear war does not break out, the cost of these arms prevents us from combatting extreme poverty throughout the world.

Time is running out!

The West must acknowledge the materialistic foundations of Capitalism, and stop posing as the defender of Christian civilization.

The East must acknowledge its own imperialism and suppression of liberty, especially religious liberty and the rights of workers.

And we of the North and the South, what have we done, and what are we doing?

Without wishing to pass judgement on anyone, we must admit that:

The North holds on to its riches, always increasing its wealth oppressing the South by injustices perpetrated through the politics of international trade.

The South maintains a small minority of rich people whose wealth steadily grows and makes the oppression brought on by the North's ambition even sadder and more humiliating.

The North created consumer society which wastes the South's raw materials, exhausting the supply, and creating pollution which spreads barren spaces and kills life along the rivers.

This modern imperialism of the North is wielded, above all, by the Multinational Corporations.

The North frequently manipulates the governments of the South, encouraging dictatorships, often military, seemingly more stable regimes.

Making use of publicity, the North imposes its life style on the South, as well as its models, and its eating habits.

The North has forced the South to participate in the arms race.

Dear Representatives of the UN:

- give us the example of rebirth and begin a new life;
- discover the most rapid and sure manner to free yourself from the right of veto, an anti-democratic privilege usurped, since its beginning, by several victorious superpowers of the Second World War. This privilege is a scandal, and the superpowers are not ashamed to use it for their own profit;
- discover the most rapid and sure manner of freeing your members from the idolatry of national security, which, in the Latin American experience, proves to be so painful with the disappearance, kidnapping and torture of thousands of people.

These two measures are capable of returning to you the respect which is sometimes denied you, when one feels the practical impossibility of coordinating 157 egos.

There are immense forces which you can stimulate and coordinate in indicating concrete objectives and a decisive importance for a real and durable peace.

- Encourage military leaders to discover a new mission for the Army, since the notion of war has changed in a very substantial way in our epoch with the weapons of mass destruction;
- encourage schools, especially universities to address the desire for authenticity, evidenced by youth, who wish to know in depth the great human problems;
- encourage the young to be experts in order to open the eyes and awaken the consciousness of persons of goodwill;
- encourage women of the whole world to help dispel the fear of unilateral disarmament;
- encourage technicians throughout the world to begin, by remaining human themselves, and to require that the human dimension of technology and electronics be safeguarded, especially in the fields of economy and politics;
- encourage the workers throughout the world to show that peace industries employ more workers than war industries, and may these latter refuse to fashion death, even for their own children;
- encourage the members of the world religions to respect each other and to join forces against violence, hatred, the arms race, war.

That is why, Pax Christi International in its recent Council meeting has addressed to you, a Manifesto on Disarmament and Security, with its practical proposals.

Spirit of God, you will never abandon your people, the humble, the oppressed who have a unique mission to build a "tomorrow" without rich or poor, without oppressors and oppressed, a "tomorrow" of true sister and brothers beneath the loving gaze of the Father of all! Amen!

TANZANIAN YOUTH STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE

Tanzania's youth are being strongly influenced by the so-called American way of life, Tanzanian pastor Gabriel Kimirei told the synod meeting of a West German regional Protestant church in April. Kimirei, vice-president of the Arusha synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania noted that many Americans visit the country and convey their "way of life."

He pointed out that many English language newspapers are like "drugs for youth." Kimirei expressed the hope that Tanzania could cope with this problem. Churches and governments should attempt to point to other ways of life for young people, he said. He noted that a Tanzanian ministry has been established, which is responsible for traditional cultural values and tries to make the youth familiar with this heritage. (Evangelischer Pressedienst)

THE ECUMENICAL YOUTH COUNCIL IN EUROPE.

"The Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE) is the fellowship of national ecumenical councils or denominational bodies of church youth work from almost every European country. We promote international exchanges and experiences for young people through the programme. We offer opportunities to discuss topics which are of common interest. We are facing the tensions between East and West, between Europe and the Third World. We want to contribute to reasonable co-existence, to detente and mutual trust, to the struggle for more peace and justice. We believe that our faith in Jesus Christ enables us to do this."

This is how the EYCE introduces itself in a pamphlet describing the various activities of 1982. These include, among others, the Third European Ecumenical Youth Conference, which took place in the GDR in April, a consultation on human rights in Sweden, a work camp in Denmark, a study camp in Great Britain, a study camp on peace issues in Holland.

The General Assembly of the EYCE which is held once every year, took place in St. Pölten, Austria October 17-23, 1982. About 100 participants from 19 countries were present.

The theme of the conference was: "The Prophetical Task of the Church - Challenges to the Ecumenical Youth Work". Professor Lüthi from Wien was responsible for the main bible study sessions. He started with the question of what a biblical prophet is, and continued to emphasize that he is a liberated person because he stands in front of God. The prophet makes use of the tradition that has been handed down because he knows that God has revealed himself in it. And he does not only explain the future, he also interprets the contemporary situation. The biblical prophet is not only interested in the spiritual life of the individual but also in the political life of the society.

The participants were then challenged to divide into groups in order to ask what the prophetical task of the church is within the youth work of our time.

With this biblical exposure as the frame of the work during the Assembly, groups were discussing the future plans on camps and seminars, the struggle for justice, the relationship between man and woman, as well as fundamental questions related to the council itself, its purpose and structure.

A Fourth European Ecumenical Youth Conference was proposed to be held in 1985. For next year - 1983 - 21 various camps and seminars in different countries are being planned.

As new General Secretary of the EYCE Laszlo Pall from Hungary was elected. And the Executive Committee consists of the following members: Myra Blyth from Great Britain as chairperson, Julius Filo from Czechoslovakia as vice chairperson, Walter Pfister from Switzerland as treasurer, and Kalevi Virtanen from Finland, Alexander Karpenko from the Soviet Union, and Giselher Hicke1 from the GDR.

CONSUMER RELIGION

We have taken the following sermon from the LSM-USA Newsletter since we think it hits home with many of us. It was delivered by Karl Koch at the National Assembly last year.

"And what has the Lord done for you today?" I don't know if you've ever been asked that question, but I have. And I never know quite how to answer. I never know how specific they want me to be. It doesn't take much looking around or even much perception to realize that this kind of supply and demand spirituality, this consumer religion is indeed the norm these days.

"Are you saved?" "If you die tonight will you go to heaven?" These potentially selfish concerns about our personal place in eternity are the all pervasive questions of the day. Bumperstickers and buttons adorning cars and carcasses declare "I am blessed!"

In this spiritual self-centeredness, God becomes the metaphysical Monty Hall, who either blesses us with a big win, or zonks us. And the legitimacy and sincerity of my faith, not to mention the presence of God is measured in how many goodies I get.

Faith is marketed like toothpaste and toilet paper; God is trivialized, and so are we!

This view of spirituality has spawned a number of interesting, if not frightening, theologies:

1. Theology of the Vending Machine. In this one, God works like a giant vending machine. You put in the appropriate amount of piety, good intentions, faultless behavior, or whatever; and you receive your packaged reward.
2. Theology of Maude. You remember the TV series Maude? Her favorite line was, "God will get you for that!" God becomes some moody and malicious deity whom we have to impress, appease, please and mollify so we're not struck down.
3. Theology of Spiritual Economics. This portrays God sitting in heaven with some gigantic spiritual calculator. When we do good, God adds to our account. When we're bad, our account is subtracted from. Then, when we die, God pushes that great subtotal button in the sky and our eternal destiny is determined.
4. Theology of Feelings. This means we judge the measure of our faith by how we feel. Jon Tal Murphree in his book, When God Says You're OK, says:

"Some persons are always feeling of their feelings to feel how their feelings are feeling. And they often feel that their feelings are not feeling as good as their feelings were feeling the last time they felt of their feelings to feel how their feelings were feeling. They take their spiritual temperature by their emotional pulse, and appraise their relationship with God by the way they feel at the moment. Obviously any person's relationship with God would be pretty precarious if it rested on such a tenuous foundation as feeling."

Notice we do a lot of talking about our faith and our decision. We assert a faith which pretends to be centered in God but which is, in reality, one that begins and ends with "me".

Martin Luther delineated two types of faith or religion. The first is very much what I have been describing: egocentric -- faith based on my moralism, my legalism, my achievements. Everything, including God, is centered in and understood in terms of me. It is as if we have a tremendous grip on ourselves. In egocentric faith, we choose God. Faith becomes personalized and prioritized.

With that context in mind, picture Solomon appearing on the PTL Club. He comes on right after the couple who started out with \$ 25 and an Amway Starter Kit and through blessing of God are now regional distributors and drive a \$ 37,000 motorhome. And Solomon comes right before the man who has the born-again dog who sings "Angels We Have Heard on High". So Jim Bakker asks Solomon, "What has the Lord done for you?" And Solomon replies, "Yahweh blessed me with a listening heart." Bakker would probably not be very impressed.

Notice Solomon's prayer: he recognizes everything as being centered in and received from God. He observes that God has placed him in the midst of a people. So he asks for a listening heart.

What does it mean to listen? It implies that I don't know everything, that I can learn from someone. It means we are directed outside of ourselves. To listen means to receive.

The request of Solomon was not centered in himself but was based outside himself in the faithfulness of God demonstrated in the past.

This brings us to the second type of faith Luther described: theocentric faith that is based on God, dependent on God. Instead of talking about how we choose God; theocentric faith, the faith of the cross, talks about how God chooses us.

God has brought about a new way of looking at life and faith with the cross. In Jesus Christ we have a new proclamation about the ground of our faith. It is no longer dependent on myself, my achievement, my faith, my status but it is all based on what God has already done in Jesus Christ. But to hear what God has done, we must stop talking long enough to hear and know it.

God says: I have guaranteed your salvation, forgiveness, acceptance, hope. This is an end to our uncertainty, despair. It frees us from our obsession with ourselves. It is the unconditional proclamation of salvation that comes to us through the Grace of God.

In Christ we have all received listening hearts. We have been claimed by God and called to get the grip off ourselves and on to the God of the Cross. To be the people of the cross means that in faith, we are all receivers and listeners.

We are so busy looking for results that we often miss the presence of God hidden in conflict, frustration, failure and pain. The cross certifies and proclaims God is the midst of those fears and uncertainties.

To have a listening heart means our definitions are changed and our assumptions are altered. It means that we are not to be obsessed with what God will give us, but to be aware of who God has made us. We are the forgiven, renewed, hopeful people of the cross.

We are people called to work in the world in the midst of pain, death and suffering; to be agents of healing and reconciliation in a world gone mad.

We know our salvation is not measured in terms of wealth, power, a stunning sex life, or whatever else the hucksters may promise us. It is not determined or measured by what we have received in things, but by the presence of God guaranteed in the cross, determined by the promises of God fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.

If we can only stop telling God what we want long enough to hear the cross.

To have a listening heart means the death of self, total despair of our own ability to ensure our salvation or identity; and entrusting ourselves to one who is greater, one whose faithfulness and love are unquestionable and sure.

To have a listening heart means knowing our authenticity, value and meaning are derived and measured from beyond, outside ourselves. It means knowing salvation comes as a gift from the one who lived, healed, loved, died and was raised.

To have a listening heart means not just being concerned about finding all the answers, wrapping existence up in a nice neat little package; but rather learning as Rilke has said, "to love the questions themselves."

It means that in the midst of these questions and struggles and uncertainties we are constantly focused on the ways in which God's love and acceptance are revealed: In the Word, in the Cross, in the bread and wine and in each other.

Narcissism, ego-centric faith, needs no other: It is always measured in terms of itself: "me and Jesus," "personal savior."

However, theocentric, Christ-centered faith assumes another -- a greater other; and the other others.

It's not just "me and Jesus." It's "we and Jesus" and "you and me."

It seems to me that narcissism focuses on that sense of insecurity and fear in a constantly uncertain world. It attempts to fill the void by centering on self to find an unshakeable source of strength, meaning and hope.

In Christ we have received listening hearts -- to announce and affirm that our lives are centered in God.

We have joined with Solomon.

LETTRE DE STAVANGER (French version)

Chers frères et soeurs en Jésus-Christ,

C'est de Stavanger, en Norvège, que nous vous saluons. Nous sommes quelque 140 hommes et femmes représentant les Eglises luthériennes de 34 pays. La Fédération luthérienne mondiale nous a réunis pour réfléchir aux problèmes de la mission et de l'évangélisation. Nous sommes une majorité de professionnels de la mission, plus d'hommes que de femmes, plus de pasteurs que de laïcs. C'est l'une des raisons pour lesquelles nous vous écrivons pour vous inviter à porter avec nous un regard lucide sur l'avenir de la mission chrétienne.

Au cours de ces journées, nous avons eu beaucoup à nous dire:

Dans de nombreux pays, la communauté chrétienne grandit. Des groupes de chrétiens donnent la preuve qu'ils sont "le sel de la terre" en confessant leur foi et en participant à la lutte contre l'injustice, par exemple en Afrique du Sud, en Namibie et en Amérique latine.

Nous avons découvert combien l'Eglise est vivante en Chine.

Nous avons entendu le cri de souffrance de nos frères en Ethiopie, dont l'Eglise est pourtant en continuelle expansion.

Nous avons appris que les chrétiens sont de plus en plus nombreux à s'engager, dans le monde entier, dans le combat pour la paix, sans hésiter à en payer le prix.

Mais nous avons aussi appris d'autres choses:

Dans de nombreux pays de "vieille chrétienté" le témoignage de l'Eglise perd de plus en plus de son impact.

Beaucoup de "chrétiens" ne le sont que de nom.

D'autres pratiquent leur foi le dimanche, mais s'en passent fort bien du lundi au samedi.

Nous sommes préoccupés quotidiennement par les nouvelles de la guerre aux îles Malouines/Falkland, du conflit entre l'Irak et l'Iran, des troubles en Amérique centrale, en Afrique australe, en Afghanistan et au Moyen-Orient ainsi que des tensions en Pologne.

C'est dans le contexte de ces souffrances, de ces destructions et de ces troubles que nous vous écrivons pour vous encourager et nous-mêmes.

La mission de Dieu dans le monde se poursuit

Jésus-Christ, le Seigneur ressuscité, à qui toute puissance a été donnée dans le ciel et sur la terre, chemine avec nous tous les jours. Il nous conduit vers la plénitude de son Royaume où règnent la vérité, la justice et la paix. Il est notre lumière, bien qu'il soit caché. De temps à autre, pourtant, il dévoile son Mystère et nous fait découvrir un reflet de sa gloire, là où sa parole de pardon est proclamée à toutes nos communautés, dans la vie d'une Eglise de maison, lorsqu'un nouveau chrétien est baptisé, lorsque nous nous rassemblons autour de sa table, que nous partageons ce que nous avons avec les autres ou que nous témoignons publiquement. Voilà ce dont nous devons continuer à parler. Nous devons en parler les uns aux autres pour fortifier notre foi et entretenir notre espérance afin de servir le Seigneur au coeur de ce monde. Il nous a justifiés par sa grâce. Notre vie lui appartient. Et pourtant, il arrive si souvent que nous ne puissions vivre en paix les uns avec les autres parce que nous sommes incapables de nous accepter comme Dieu nous a acceptés. Nous devons aussi parler de cela à tous ceux qui n'ont pas encore entendu la bonne nouvelle de Dieu.

La mission de Dieu "jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre" est à la fois parole et action

Suivre le Christ dans sa mission signifie que nous devenons ses disciples en paroles et en actes. Nous avons bien des choses à apprendre:

Les chrétiens ne constituent qu'un quart de la population mondiale. Des millions d'êtres humains n'ont jamais entendu la bonne nouvelle de l'Evangile. Nous devons continuer à être des missionnaires là où nous vivons et à envoyer des missionnaires à ceux qui n'ont pas la bonne nouvelle de l'amour de Dieu en Christ et à ceux dont la foi doit être ravivée.

Il ne suffit pas de parler et il ne suffit pas d'agir. Jésus a prêché et il a aussi guéri. En Christ, nous reconnaissons combien il est hypocrite de parler du "pain de vie" tout en refusant de considérer la faim dans le monde. En lui, nous comprenons aussi qu'il ne suffit pas de procurer du pain à ceux qui ont faim si nous négligeons de proclamer et de confesser le nom de Jésus-Christ pour que les affamés puissent parvenir à la foi et être sauvés.

Notre vie elle-même est une prédication. Le Seigneur ressuscité est présent dans nos actions par le Saint-Esprit et non seulement dans nos paroles lorsque nous prêchons. Aucun pouvoir au monde ne peut empêcher cette forme de prédication. C'est en souffrant, en mourant et en ressuscitant que Jésus a prêché avec le plus de clarté.

La vie de nos communautés est aussi une prédication. Notre communion fraternelle à la table du Seigneur donne-t-elle envie aux autres d'y prendre place? Est-ce que toutes les ressources de nos paroisses, y compris leurs biens matériels, sont mises au service des autres? Les chrétiens sont-ils préparés à être des témoins dans l'exercice de leur profession, là où ils habitent, partout où le Christ n'est pas connu? Est-ce que la vie et l'oeuvre de nos paroisses sont ancrées dans la parole de Dieu? Pouvons-nous vraiment y dialoguer entre nous ainsi qu'avec ceux qui sont différents de nous?

La mission de Dieu exige la participation de tous

La collaboration dans la mission est un élément essentiel de la vie de toutes les paroisses. Nous devons faire face à de graves questions et la survie de notre monde dépend de la manière dont nous réagissons. Voici les situations que révèlent nos échecs et notre éloignement de Dieu:

Les tensions entre l'Est et l'Ouest et la folie de la course aux armements nucléaires.

Le déséquilibre entre riches et pauvres, au sein des nations et entre elles, le manque de compréhension entre le Nord et le Sud.

Les problèmes et les besoins des handicapés, des réfugiés, des chômeurs, des alcooliques, des drogués, des opprimés et des marginalisés.

Le fait que partout dans le monde il y a des gens qui n'ont jamais entendu l'Evangile, l'ont oublié ou ne l'ont pas encore accepté.

Nous avons besoin les uns des autres pour la mission dans le monde de Dieu. Nous avons besoin de la collaboration de toutes les dénominations, de toutes les Eglises, de toutes les paroisses. Réfléchissez à cela avec nous. Parlez-en entre vous et faites-nous connaître vos espoirs, vos expériences, vos besoins, vos problèmes. Engagez-vous, comme nous, à vous demander chaque jour: "Comment ai-je prié pour la mission de Dieu, comment puis-je y participer avec les talents et les biens que Dieu m'a donnés?"

Le Royaume de Dieu vient. La promesse de Dieu s'accomplira. Cheminons aux côtés du Seigneur Jésus-Christ qui a dit: "Ce n'est pas vous qui m'avez choisi, c'est moi qui vous ai choisis et institués pour que vous alliez, que vous produisiez du fruit et que votre fruit demeure" (Jn 15,16).

Les participants au Colloque interrégional
sur la mission et l'évangélisation

PRE-ASSEMBLY YOUTH GATHERING PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

The photos on the following page are from the October 16-23 meeting of the Preparatory Committee in Geneva.

Clockwise from the top:

- a) Rev. Munib Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan accentuates a point in the discussion.
- b) Susanne Kasch of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria offers some thoughts about a small group report.
- c) Rev. Christina Lövestam calling the Committee back to its goal of equal participation between men and women as Nancy Larson (American Lutheran Church) looks on.
- d) Joan Lofgren (youth intern) and Kpadeson Sumo (Lutheran Church in Liberia) considering two different aspects of an issue.

These are just a few glimpses of a hard-working, enjoyable Committee . . .!

